



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

COUNCILMEMBER BRIAN MAIENSCHIN  
CITY ATTORNEY CASEY GWINN

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **MAIENSCHIN, GWINN UNVEIL INNOVATIVE JUVENILE DIVERSION PROGRAM FOR SAN DIEGO TEENS**

*Teen Court to serve as tool to combat juvenile crime, involve youth in judicial process*

SAN DIEGO—Councilmember Brian Maienschein and San Diego City Attorney Casey Gwinn today unveiled an innovative juvenile diversion program designed to allow first-time, non-violent juvenile offenders to participate in a binding sentencing hearing that is administered by a jury of their peers – other high school students.

Under the new Teen Court program, juvenile offenders that are referred from the San Diego Police Department must first accept responsibility for the crime they have committed and then agree to abide by the punishment selected by a jury of high school students. Punishments can include counseling, workshops related to the offense, community service, letters of apology to victims and parents, research assignments or a correctional facility tour.

The sentences imposed by the teen juries are binding and officially recognized by the Juvenile Division of San Diego County Superior Court.

“We need to change the behavior of juvenile offenders before they begin to commit more serious crimes,” stated Councilmember Maienschein. “Teen Court will teach high school students – offenders and non-offenders – about the consequences of making bad choices and hopefully help them change their behavior before serious crimes are committed.”

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**Teen Court**  
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Teen Court is not only a cost effective tool designed to get kids back on the right track without further burdening the overcrowded legal system, it is also a program to give interested teens more exposure and experience with the judicial process. It has partnered with San Diego Unified School District and local high schools to give San Diego youth the opportunity to see, first hand, how the judicial system works by empowering volunteer teens to play the roles of prosecutor, defense attorney and bailiff in the courtroom.

“If we save one additional life or keep one more teenager out of Juvenile Hall, every moment we have spent developing this program will have been worth it,” said City Attorney Gwinn.

Councilmember Brian Maienschein and City Attorney Casey Gwinn served as presiding judges during Youth Court’s inaugural hearings, but volunteer judges, attorneys and civic leaders will serve during subsequent Youth Court proceedings.

Teen Court is the result of a merger between two separate youth diversion programs, Youth Court, a highly successful program where Councilmember Brian Maienschein served for five years as volunteer Executive Director prior to being elected to the City Council, and Peer Court, a similar program operated by the San Diego City Attorney’s office.

“This brings together two proven programs to help at risk teens into one program that will be the most comprehensive early intervention program anywhere in California,” said City Attorney Gwinn.

“My desire to expand diversion programs like Teen Court throughout San Diego is one of the primary reasons I ran for City Council,” said Maienschein. “During my tenure at Youth Court, I saw the tremendous difference that the program made in the lives of so many teens and I wanted to have the opportunity to take those successes city-wide. Needless to say, I’m thrilled to see my first goal as a city councilmember completed.”

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